

Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

FOUNDED 1980 AS AMES HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

Newsletter to Members 2006 SPRING ... ISSUE #2/4

The mission of the Ames Historical Society is to preserve local history and illuminate its stories.



The original "Munn House" at 726 Duff was modernized from a Victorian style home (top) to Prairie style (bottom).

Ames Historical Society Board:

President Kathy Svec
Vice-President Janet Jepeway
Secretary Amy Swenson
Treasurer Ken Cameron

Members:

Roger Coulson, Dennis Wendell, Margaret Elbert Benson, Carole Jensen, Amy Swenson, Dottie Tschopp McGee, Cynthia Bennet, Peggy Baer; the Board meets the 2nd Monday of each month at City Hall.

Administrator Alan Spohnheimer
Staff:

Ames Historical Society is an incorporated, 501c3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through publications, programs, exhibitions and operation of an archive and historic site.

Headqtrs: 108 5th, Ames, Iowa 50010
Open Wed-Fri, 1-5pm
PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010
Mail:
Phone: 515-232- 2148
E-mail: ameshistorical@qwest.net
Website: www.ameshistoricalsociety.org

The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Direct comments & questions to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail above.

Hoggatt School is located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18th and Burnett, Ames, IA. Open April 1 through October 31.

Historical Society is Fueled by People Power!



A fundraiser night was held last December at Big Table Books, 330 Main Street in Ames. Manager Susan Bedell hands the check to Society Administrator, Alan Spohnheimer. Thanks to all who shopped!

The Washington A.M.E.S. 4H Club spent an afternoon polishing silver for AHS: Pierce Hanway, Nora Benson, Emma Hoefer, Peter Benson. Simon Hoefer, Hannah Short, Cali Short.



Society Board members at the annual meeting on February 11: (l to r) Carole Jensen, Margaret Elbert, Kathy Svec, Dottie McGee.

ISU Theatre retired faculty member, Burt Drexler (left) lent his best theater voice to a reading of writer Steve Grooms' (right) zesty Ames stories at the Feb. 11 annual meeting – a laugh-filled morning enjoyed by all.



Border's Book Store in Ames sponsored an AHS fundraising weekend last September. Pictured are (l to r): Cynthia Bennet, Margaret Elbert, Colleen Hamilton, Roger Coulson (of AHS) and Alice Rippel and Diane Dvorak (from Border's).

Ames Stories – Unique Tales in Local History



The Nibble Nook

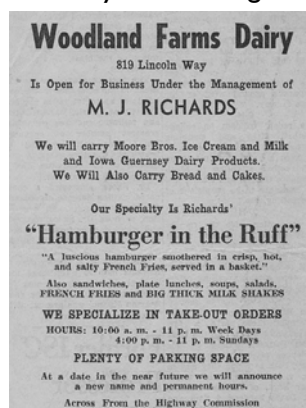
Tom Richards remembers his family's experiences in the restaurant business

My parents, Myrlin J. Richards and Mary V. Richards, owned and operated a restaurant in west Ames from about 1955 until sometime after 1972.

My mother was from south-central Nebraska, and my father was from southeastern Colorado, although his family has roots in Iowa. In his youth, Dad spent summers on the family farm in Wright County. My great-grandfather is buried in a family plot in Webster City. Mom and Dad ran a delicatessen in Tacoma, Washington for a time, but decided to move to Ames in 1951 so Dad could attend Iowa State College.

They bought an Air Stream trailer that they named "The Wild Goose" and brought themselves and three children across the Rocky Mountains from Puget Sound to the plains of Iowa.

After a couple of years of studying engineering at Iowa State, my father bought a restaurant (left) across from



the Iowa State Highway Commission facilities. A year or two later, he bought a second restaurant on Lincoln Highway in the western outskirts of Ames. Already known as the *Nibble Nook*, the name was continued and is still familiar to many long-term residents of our city.

Operating two restaurants was too much, so my father sold the first one and focused his energies on the second one west of town. He added a carhop station to it and introduced curb service to Ames. Then he added a dining room that featured a large, stone fireplace with an over-mantel bronze relief sculpture of two mustang horses running side by side.

Next he added a second dining room paneled in dark, stained knotty pine featuring a large mural. A copy of



one by Grandma Moses, it depicted many homespun images of rural life such as hanging out the wash and feeding animals. In this dining room my father incorporated a plate rail into the paneling design, and for many years collected plates and displayed them in the room.



The addition of a buffet room introduced this type of service to Ames. His specialties were pearl tapioca, pinto beans, and fruit and custard pies, all made from scratch in the restaurant kitchen. His piecrusts were light and flaky like good country cooks make, not the thick, soft, waxy creations that come frozen out of factory kitchens today and are sold as home-made.

We processed enough of the food we served to feel slightly embarrassed to be found opening cans (which we also did). The final building project my father undertook at the restaurant was the carport. That enabled people to pull up and drop off passengers under the protection of a roof.

We stayed in the restaurant business in Ames from the early 1950s until my father's untimely death in 1972. I ran the business for a short time after that until my father's affairs were all concluded. Then we leased it to a long-time employee of his, Celia Baker. She and her husband ran it as Baker's Buffet for a few years. During their tenure, a group of Asian students undertook a search for a place where they could share a congregate meal on Sunday evenings. The search

brought them to the Bakers who let them use the restaurant. In a fairly short time this led to an Asian restaurant being started in the building alongside Bakers' Buffet. This was most probably Ames' first Chinese restaurant. They operated together for a while, but eventually Bakers bowed out and left the place to the Asian restaurant. It operated for a short while and closed.

A second Asian restaurateur took it over and made a success of the business now named Fu Lin. This all occurred in the first half of the 1970s. The property changed hands again in the course of settling my father's estate and the Fu Lin Restaurant closed.

The business that replaced it was a bar/restaurant called Smokey Pete's. My father had always toyed with the idea of getting a liquor license, but was prevented from doing so by my mother's staunch Methodist upbringing. She had been a tireless campaigner against liquor by the drink when it came to Iowa, so much so that during those years her brother from Nebraska sent her an axe in case she wanted to bust up a saloon. My father once confided to me that he didn't really mind not serving alcohol. He said people weren't always at their best when drinking, and doing business with alcohol could have significant downsides.

While my father and I were both touched by my mother's fervor, I did spend some evenings at Smokey Pete's. They retained much of the original décor of the place, but filled the front dining room with a bar. The managers of Smokey Pete's were talented carpenters, and had fabricated a bar top out of particle board that they molded into graceful curving shapes. Filled and smoothed and then sprayed with a coat of pearlescent blue automotive lacquer, it became truly unique. I believe Smokey Pete's was the last restaurant to operate in that building.

Although I don't remember the exact year (it was when Larry Curtis was mayor of Ames, 1990-1997), a fellow came up with the idea of combining a laundromat with a bar and soon had the fastest growing franchise in Iowa. He bought the restaurant property, demolished the building, brought in several feet of fill dirt, and built a new building. His place was called Duds and Suds. With its demolition, in turn, the site now awaits more intensive development as Ames grows to the west.

Looking back on the years when the Richards family operated a restaurant there, I see how our family worked together to make the enterprise a success. We all pitched in and made a good life together. Our biggest meals were Sunday noon and Iowa State games. People would line up and wait for us to open the doors. We could let 225 people through the buffet line

and get them seated in about 30 minutes. Then over the course of the next two hours or so we could feed 150 more. That was about the limit of our resources. Then there would be a tedious process of putting things back right and sparkling clean and preparing for the next meal.

Ames has grown out past the site of Richards Restaurant. All the land surrounding the site was still planted in row crops when my father died in 1972. Now it is all prime commercial real estate. Had he lived, he would have been a wealthy man.

Tom Richards grew up in Ames and now lives in Nevada.

the NIBBLE NOOK Drive-In
OPENS TONIGHT
Under the Management of M. J. Richards

FEATURING

* BIG JUICY STEAKS * Delicious Golden Brown FRIED CHICKEN
* Tasty, Tangy SEA Foods * ITALIAN SPAGHETTI & MEAT SAUCE

HAMBURGERS • MALTS • SANDWICHES

We Will Be Open:
TUES., WED., THURS., FRI. -- 5 P. M. to 12 P. M.
SATURDAYS -- 5 P. M. to 1 P. M. • SUNDAYS -- 12 NOON to 10 P. M.
CLOSED ALL DAY MONDAY

"Good Food In a Friendly Atmosphere. Come Out and See Us"

WEST ON LINCOLNWAY PHONE 3600

Another Nibble Nook Recollection

By Jerry Litzel, Ames

Good onion rings and French fries! Every Friday night our family called in an order to Richards. My Dad and I would get in his 1949 Chrysler "woody" station wagon, pick up the order and bring it back home for us, my Mom and two brothers.

I rode along in order to eat some of the fries while they were still fresh and crisp. We only lived a half-mile away, so I had to eat fast. Of course my tongue always got burned in the process.

When Richards had the drive-in restaurant, I remember my Dad getting upset once because the carhops didn't take his tray off the car window quickly enough. He set the tray on the ground and took the catsup and mustard squeeze bottles home where we used them for many years after.

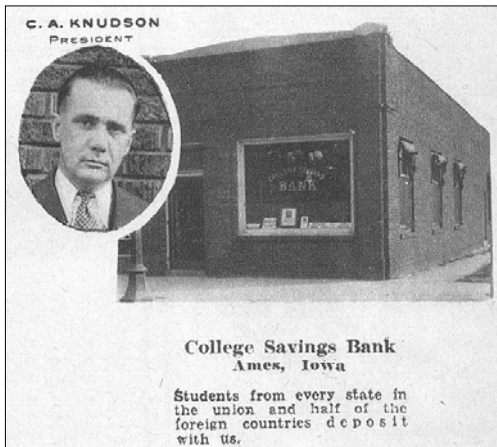
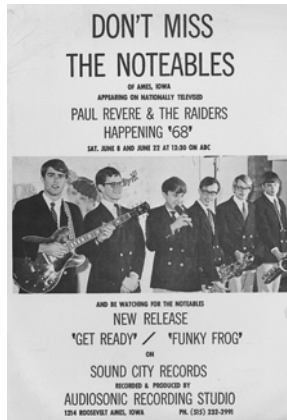
One special night we were eating there during Miss America's visit to Ames (1950s). Before she left, she asked if she could take a menu home with her for a keepsake. [According to Tom Richards, she also received a marriage proposal that night!]

The Curator's Column by Dennis Wendell

Donations to the Collection

Highlights: gifts received Jan. to Mar. 2006

- **Archie's Shoe Repair** artifacts [Rick Lippard]
- **Mandarin Restaurant** moongate [Dennis Wendell]
- 1935 watercolor drawing by Owen Baty of **Ames Bandshell** [Farwell Brown Collection]
- Bars from former **Ames City Jail** window [Lynn Christian]
- 40 color prints and negatives of **Page dragline at Hallett's Quarry** [Bob Kelly]
- **I.O.O.F. Grand Lodge** panoramic photo from 1919; **Noteables** (1960s Ames rock band) poster [Janet Klaas]
- **Lily Riggs** material (1953 Iowa Mother of the Year from Ames) [Peggy Riggs]
- **Central Junior High School** photos from 1940s [Terry Adams]
- Photo of Beardshear School boys, including **Teddy Kooser**, in Miss Mabie's 1947-48 3rd grade class making hand-dipped candles [Carol Cummings]



- **College Savings Bank/US Bank** and **Lincoln Way 1963 widening** photos and archival materials [Lou Ann Norlin/US Bank]

Kathy Svec's March 22 lecture on Carr's Pool (one of the *Along the Skunk* series) attracted a large attendance and generated donations of pool-related stories, clippings and photos by Gary Carr, Bob Clark, Mary McNabb Kearns and Lois Anderson. We appreciate these items that enhance our understanding of the Carr family and their contributions to Ames!

Ames Tribune Photo Archive

4 x 5" negatives. Phase Two of the HRDP grant-funded project for preserving the Archive is well under way with identification and scanning of key negatives from the mid to late 1950s.

The project involves first identifying significant images for preservation. This step is done by the curator and recently recruited team member, Jerry Litzel, who then searches the microfilm version of the Tribune to see if those images were used and a caption provided.

Scanning of each 4 x 5" negative takes about 10 minutes at the recommended archival standard of 1000dpi. Alan Spohnheimer patiently scans, improves and archives these images. Staff is exuberant each time a classic image is discovered. Exciting finds include: Ames movie theaters (Capitol, Collegian, and New Ames), Judisch Drug Store interior, Van's Grocery, Leisure Laundry, Nims Sportsman, and Moore's Dairy bottling line.

Mug shot collection. Accompanying the Tribune's one million negatives was a collection of portrait prints consisting of some 5,500 small-size images, generally 1x2" and many larger format photos. Referred to as "mug shots" in the newspaper trade, these head and



shoulders images of local folks appeared in the paper from the late 1950s through the 1960s. Over the past two years numerous volunteers have worked on this project, but it was faithful member,

Martha Rasmussen, (right, with staff member Alice Mellen) who finally finished the indexing of the small format collection. Since March 2004, Martha has come in for several hours each week to count, sort, alphabetize and finally input names into a database. Users will be surprised at the names and "young" faces represented (remember that the Tribune used to print photos of all the high school graduates!). Eventually this index will find its way to our Web site.

Sports photos. Recent requests for photos of specific individuals have caused us to implement another aspect of the project: identifying Ames High School and ISU sports figures in 8 x 10" glossy photos from the 1980s and 1990s.

Usage. Prints made from scans of the negatives are being used for research purposes by local individuals. A book of poems entitled *Corn silage and other poems* by Robert Owens (2005) included a Tribune photo of an Omar bakery van. Images of the Topahollow Inn operated by the Cox family from the late 1940s to 1957 will be given to the daughters for display in their Suburban Restaurant at the Gilbert corner. Tribune photos are also being added to our Web site to illustrate various schools, businesses, organizations, residents, and events.

Building Plans Collection

Since 1927, the City of Ames has required property owners to deposit blueprints and plans when requesting a building or remodeling permit. In March 1990 many city offices were moved from the old train depot to newly remodeled quarters in the former high school building. That year a decision was made to thin the vast collection of accumulated plans. They were first offered to homeowners and the remainder was transferred to the Ames Historical Society (AHS). Due to space constraints, Inspections Division currently maintains a retention schedule of only five years for these materials. Wishing to preserve these resources for posterity, AHS made an agreement with Inspections that assures an annual transfer of plans. Most plans date from 1950 to 2000.

Various volunteers and staff have been laboriously indexing this growing collection. Last month staff member, Alice Mellen, completed data entry for the latest transfer of 325 sets of plans, and revised the entire database that now numbers 2,793.

Indexed elements include: Address, Builder/Architect, Date, Type/Number of Plans, and Categories (commercial, residential, Greek houses, and Religious). Having a complete database will allow us to better respond to requests for specific addresses. For example, a recent request for plans by Chi Omega Sorority was expedited by doing a quick search on the computer.

Other Indexing Projects

Staffer Alice Mellen has also indexed major articles in our newsletter, 1981 to date, and is now indexing our recently acquired copy of Will Page's *Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa* published in two volumes in 1992. Kudos to both Alice and Martha Rasmussen ("mug shots") for their accomplishments!

Advice for Collectors

Collections sometimes come to us with documents and photos that have been stained and damaged by use of inappropriate adhesives or mountings. By now most

people are aware of the damage that **Scotch tape** and **rubber cement** cause.

However, not everyone realizes the consequences of using **lamination** or "**magnetic**" **photo albums**. These practices are not considered archival – that is, reversible. In fact, they serve to hasten the destruction of the enclosed material! Highly acidic newspaper clippings suffer the most, and literally "stew in their own juices" since lamination involves a heat process that fuses a document or photo between two layers of clear plastic. Enclosed items become discolored and can never be removed. Laminated items often do not produce high quality scans. Likewise, the adhesive stripes on "magnetic" pages permeate the attached item over time, embrittle it, and prevent its removal. Remember, these two procedures are intended for short-term protection of ephemeral material that would be subject to heavy usage. The correct methods of preserving materials of enduring value are either slipping them into Mylar sleeves or encapsulation. Consult our Web site under Links/Preservation for further information.

While on my preservation soapbox, I want to end with two obvious but important caveats. Avoid storing historic papers and fabrics in **damp, unventilated areas** such as older basements. Without ventilation these materials become musty and moldy and may be destroyed by vermin such as silverfish. **Sunlight** is the final destructive element I'll mention. Exposing fabrics and paper-based items to direct sunlight (or fluorescent light) guarantees fading and eventual destruction. Heed the advice on Antiques Roadshow and protect these materials.

Call for Volunteers

Contact the Curator at 232-2148 or 233-1404 if you would like to help with these projects:

- **Sports Photos.** As mentioned above, we are in need of one or more volunteers who could identify Ames High School and ISU sports figures from the 1980s and 1990s. Please call us if you feel qualified and are willing to help – 515-232-2148.
- **Landmark Challenge.** In 2003 the City sponsored a \$10,000 contest to transform the 312-foot-tall power plant at the east end of Main Street into a local landmark. A total of 115 proposals were received. Remember the winning one – a ring of colored light designed by Chicago architects Rashmi Ramaswamy and Mark Peters? The City has entrusted AHS with the preservation of these designs during the five-year retention period and beyond. Help is solicited in indexing and cataloging these designs.

Ames Historical Society News

Bert & Mary Adams Estate Auction Set For May 20

An auction of household goods belonging to Bert and Mary Adams will take place on Saturday, May 20 starting at 10am. It will be at 1013 Adams Street, the distinctive home that was designed and built by Dr. Adams himself. While artwork, antiques and historic artifacts have selected for retention by the Society, there are many items of interest for auction-goers as well as a selection of goods donated by the AHS Board. The auction will be handled by J & J Auction Crew and the proceeds will benefit the Ames Historical Society. Public is welcome.

Hoggatt School Open for Tours

Ames' first schoolhouse, Hoggatt School, has been restored to the 1860's time period and is located at 18th and Burnett on the grounds of Meeker School. It opened April 1st for the 2006 season and is available for scheduled tours until October 31. Elementary classroom teachers bring their classes to Hoggatt for a living history experience and other groups may arrange visits. Hoggatt School will be open 2-4:30pm on Saturdays and Sundays from June 3 to August 27. AHS members who would enjoy learning to be a docent at the little school may call Carole Jensen at 515-233-2431.

Happy Birthday, Eldon!

Eldon Bauge, who grew up in the Norwegian log home that was restored by AHS at McFarland Park, will mark his 90th birthday on Monday, July 24. Happy Birthday from all of us, Eldon! Eldon's sharp memory and recollections greatly assisted us during the restoration.

Heritage Seeds for Sale!



A selection of "antique" vegetable and flower seeds is being offered by AHS for \$1.50/pack. They are unique varieties from Seed Savers in Decorah, Iowa. Seed Savers is dedicated to preserving plants that have largely disappeared

from Midwestern gardens. Stop by 108 5th on Fri. May 5, 5-7pm, Sat. May 6, 9am-noon or during regular open hours. Call 232-2148 for information.

The Gift of Local History

Know someone with an Ames connection that would enjoy local history stories? Why not give the gift of a Society membership! You'd give the sweet pleasure of remembrance or the fun of learning fascinating new facts – and support the development of a museum for our community all at the same time.



An Ames resident brought her granddaughter to Society HQ for a visit. She had called to say she was caring for her granddaughter during Spring Break.



Despite our rather cluttered state of affairs, they both had a good time. The youngster tried on the Northwood School mascot costume (above) and learned how a portable organ sounded, demonstrated by curator, Dennis Wendell (right).

AHS Expands Storage

The Society has expanded to the second level of its 108 Fifth headquarters. Three hundred additional square feet in an upstairs apartment is providing much-needed storage for artifacts that continue to come in on a weekly basis. Rearrangement of the street-level space will provide more amenities to staff and visitors.

Along the Skunk Lecture Series a Great Success!

Along the Skunk, the four-lecture series offered monthly from January to April, was a great success for series co-sponsors. Between 900 and 1000 people attended the talks that had to be moved to larger quarters at Ames City Auditorium to accommodate interested crowds.

Hallett's Quarry by Dennis Wendell, *Stalking the Skunk* by David Gradwohl, *Carr Family and Carr's Pool* by Kathy Svec and *Lake Comar Stories* by Kay Munsen each provided fascinating stories and elicited many warm reminiscences from the audience – as well as additional artifacts for the AHS collection.

We sincerely thank our speakers and our co-sponsors: Skunk River Paddlers, Ames Public Library and Story County Conservation. Next year's series is already being planned for January to April 2007.

Museum Site Committee Report

Site Committee Background

Late in 2004, the Society formed a Site Committee to actively seek a permanent home for an Ames museum. Members and local residents with particular areas of expertise were invited to join this group.

Site Committee members were:

- Bill Dreyer, architect
- Dean Hunziker, developer
- Reiny Friedrich, developer
- Mary Atherly, former Farm House curator
- Sharon Wirth, preservationist
- Stewart Hinerfeld, financial advisor
- Terry Adams, charter member AHS
- Jere Maddux, lawyer
- Rollie and Willie Struss, members
- Catherine Hunt, member
- Leo Lawlor, member

Advisors: Norm Rudi, Steve Lekwa, Ted Tedesco

AHS: Kathy Svec, Dennis Wendell, Peggy Baer

Museum Space Needs

The 10,000 square feet desired would consist of:

2,000 sq. ft.	exhibition space
2,500 sq. ft.	collection storage
1,000 sq. ft.	processing & work area
1,000 sq. ft.	exhibition prep/construction
1,000 sq. ft.	program/activity area for ~100 people
1,000 sq. ft.	research/reference area; oral history
700 sq. ft.	offices, restroom, HVAC, etc
800 sq. ft.	entry, gift shop, hallways, coat closet
10,000 sq. ft.	TOTAL

Site Committee Work

From December 2004 to December 2005, the Committee toured and/or considered more than a dozen properties. Each property was analyzed and compared based on the following requirements:

- Square footage available – building and site
- Assessed value and general condition
- Location (prefer Main Street Cultural District)
- Availability of, or access to parking
- Presence of an elevator
- Possibility for expansion
- Presence of space with high ceilings for storage shelving
- Presence of large open area for displays of large and small artifacts
- Noteworthy architecture; historical “cache”
- Availability for purchase

Properties Toured or Considered

The group toured, considered, inquired about, and/or discussed the following properties:

Odd Fellows Temple at 225 Main, former Snyder Drug Building on South Duff, former John Huber Clothing on Main Street, American State Bank at 6th and Grand, Roosevelt School on Ninth Street, former Gas Office at Douglas and Main, Elks Club at 522 Douglas, four-plex apartment, 512 Douglas, Ascension Lutheran Church at 7th and Kellogg, Town Center at Burnett and Main, Adams Funeral Home at 502 Douglas, former Sheldon-Munn Hotel on Main Street, The Depot, Lechner Building at 208 Fifth Street, Mathison Building at 504 Burnet, the possibility of shared space in a public library expansion.


Committee members agreed that the most important considerations in a final recommendation were:

- Price and availability for sale
- Long-term fulfillment of identified needs
- Availability of parking
- Cost of renovation and maintenance
- Appeal to the community
- Fundraising potential
- Inclusion in the Main Street Cultural District

Next Steps


Conversations are currently underway with landowners of the properties that were ranked as coming the closest to meeting the needs of a future museum. Excitement is building as a vision is beginning to crystallize for a permanent museum facility! Members and friends who would like to take a leadership role in planning and fundraising are invited to join us in making this dream a reality!

Stay Tuned!



Ames Historical Society Member Benefit
10% off regularly priced books at
BIG TABLE BOOKS, 303 Main, Ames
Offer good to 7/1/06 by showing this newsletter.

Ames Historical Society Member Benefit
10% off collector's reference books at
ANTIQUÉ AMES, 202 Main, Ames
Offer good by showing this newsletter.



Ted Kooser Day: A Delight!

The events of Ted Kooser Day on April 8 attracted residents of all ages and radiated a homey quality that felt a bit like an old fashioned reunion. The Ames-born US Poet Laureate read to 450 people at Ames City Auditorium, signed books at the Octagon Center for the Arts and visited with old friends who dropped in to see him. The K-12 poetry contest yielded 12 young winners who got to meet the famous poet and read their work on the radio and at an evening Poetry Jam.

At City Auditorium, Kooser commented that it was the first time he had been on that stage since he walked across it at his high school graduation. Responding to a question, he promised that he would continue to write his "American Life in Poetry" newspaper column as long as he is able to do it.

Ted is a 1957 Ames High School graduate who currently lives in Nebraska. Kooser Day was organized and funded by the Historic Old Town Neighborhood, Ames Historical Society, Ames Public Library, Kiwanis, individual donors and the Iowa arts Council/National Endowment for the Arts.



Neighborhood hosts and organizers of Ted Kooser Day.
Ted is third from the left, (tie).

Call for 2006 renewals.

Membership renewals for 2006 are due on the one-year anniversary of last year's payment. See the label on this newsletter for your anniversary date and level.

Introductory - 1st year	\$10	Sustaining	\$100
Individual	\$25	Benefactor	\$500
Family	\$40	Patron	\$1,000
Friend	\$50		

Additional amount for

Building Fund \$ _____
Operations Endowment \$ _____

Name _____

Send to:
Ames Historical Society, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #122
AMES, IOWA 50010

AMES HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 821
AMES, IOWA 50010